

Lolo School District #7
11395 Highway 93 South
Lolo, MT 59847

www.lolo.k12.mt.us



"Learn Today, Lead Tomorrow!"

EXHIBIT 13
DATE Jan 12, 2011
HB 15

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DATE: January 10, 2011
TO: Montana Legislative Long Range Planning Subcommittee
FROM: Dr. Michael Magone, Superintendent
RE: Endorsement of Quality Schools Grant Funding

It is with great appreciation that I firmly endorse the Montana Department of Commerce's Quality Schools Grant Program opportunity for Montana's schools. This past year Lolo School District was awarded approximately \$12,500 in Quality Schools Planning Grant funds to support our community's and school's evaluation of our school facility condition as it relates to the safety, security and quality educational services provided to our students, parents and entire community. The funding allowed us to gather considerable input from community members, local legislators (especially Senator Cliff Larsen), the Missoula County Sheriff's Department, the Montana Highway Patrol, other Missoula County officials, the Montana Department of Transportation, Lolo School-related personnel, board members and students, as well as engineering/architectural input to help us identify primary facility-related issues and prioritize them for our school and community. Lolo School and the Montana Department of Commerce shared in funding this study and we could not have accomplished it without the Montana Department of Commerce's help.

The study identified facility safety and security issues as our primary priorities. Specifically, the top priority was to address our long-standing treacherous access issues that students, parents and community members face daily when accessing Lolo School. Lolo School, as some of you may know, is directly located on the four-lane and extremely busy Highway 93 South, as well as built on a hillside leading down to Highway 93. With over 600 students attending Lolo School each day, and most parents opting to drop off their students at the school or have them walk/ride their bikes to school, the situation has always been an "accident waiting to happen." There have been a myriad of close calls between highway traffic, parent/community traffic and student traffic. With only one access to the school, daily traffic jams occurred on the sole access as well as with the Highway 93 traffic where the access meets the highway and its commuters.

Additionally, with Lolo School's location on Highway 93, our second priority was to improve the security of accessing our buildings, especially the lower building (originally built in 1900). The days of a one room schools house with a front access onto a narrow dirt road (that would become Highway 93) is long gone, and the dangers of people easily coming off Highway 93 and walking into the school without being observed have been and are real. Our proposal was to change the main entrance to the lower building to a different, much more visible and secure location.

Lolo School was fortunate to have been awarded a Montana Department of Quality Schools Grant for approximately \$479,000. This money, combined with assistance from the Montana Department of Transportation, enabled us to address our top two priorities with regard to improving safe and secure access to the school. Last spring, summer and fall Lolo School added a new access drive, improved existing access drives and parking areas, and changed the main entrance location to the lower building. It has made an INCREDIBLE daily difference in the safety and security for all concerned, namely the following:

- The approximately 600 students who daily attend Lolo School
- The hundreds of parents who daily drop off and pick up their kids at Lolo School
- The almost 100 school employees who work at Lolo School
- The thousands of commuters who drive from the Bitterroot Valley to Missoula, passing by Lolo School in rush-hour traffic fashion at the same time our kids are coming to school (often during dark winter days and on slippery winter roads) as well as during the afternoons right after school when they are driving home (again, often during dark and slippery wintery days).
- The various community members and service providers who access the school.

The bottom line is that the Quality Schools Grant has vastly improved the safety and well-being for thousands of people in our area and, with doubt, has likely saved a child's life or two in the future. On behalf of Lolo School, the Lolo Community, and all of those commuters from the Bitterroot and Missoula (many of whom have let us know how much they have appreciated the changes), I cannot thank the Montana Department of Commerce enough for their financial support as well as the outstanding work they have done with us on this project. Similarly, I cannot thank the Montana Legislature enough for its willingness to provide such funding to the Montana Department of Commerce.

Given there are many more schools out there with similar needs, I strongly encourage you to once again fund the Montana Department of Commerce's Quality Schools Grant Program.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Respectfully submitted – Michael Magone, Lolo School Superintendent